



LESSONS & CAROLS

the promise of the Messiah - the birth of Jesus
Scripture - carols - choral music - hymns

Processional Hymn, *Once in royal David's city, Congregation vv. 1-3 (H 102)*

A Bidding Prayer

Officiant: Dear People of God: in this Christmas Season, let it be our duty and delight to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem, and see the Son of God lying in the manger.

Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion against him until the glorious redemption brought to us by his holy Child Jesus, and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world, for peace and justice on earth, for the unity and mission of the Church for which he died, and especially for his Church in our country and in this city.

And because he particularly loves them, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and unloved, the aged and little children, as well as all those who do not know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and that whole multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in Jesus, we are one for evermore.

And now, to sum up all these petitions, let us pray in the words which Christ himself has taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Officiant: The Almighty God bless us with his grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life; and to the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all. **Amen.**

First Lesson, Genesis 3: 1-15

Adam and Eve rebel against God and are cast out of the Garden of Eden.

Hymn 60, *Creator of the stars of night*, vv. 1-3

Second Lesson, Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet proclaims that God will come and save us..

Hymn 75, *There's a voice in the wilderness crying*

Third Lesson, Isaiah 7:10-15

God promises that a child shall be conceived who will be known as "God with us."

Hymn 82, *Of the Father's love begotten*

Fourth Lesson, Luke 1:26-38

The Angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will bear the Son of the Most High.

Hymn 265, *The angel Gabriel from heaven came*

Fifth Lesson, Luke 1:39-56

The Virgin Mary is greeted by Elizabeth and proclaims her joy.

Hymn 437, *Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!*

Sixth Lesson, Luke 2:1-7

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

Hymn 78, *O little town of Bethlehem*, vv. 1-3

Seventh Lesson, Luke 2: 8–20

Jesus is worshipped by shepherds and angels.

Hymn 93, *Angels, from the realms of glory*

Eighth Lesson, Luke 2:21-35

Jesus receives his name and is presented to Simeon in the Temple.

Hymn 126, *The people who in darkness walked*

Ninth Lesson, John 1: 1–14

The Word was made flesh and we have seen his glory.

Hymn 84, *Love came down at Christmas*

Officiant: Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Recessional Hymn, *Joy to the world! The Lord is come* (H 100)

The Dismissal

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Notes for a Service of Christmas Lessons and Carols

We usually have two Sundays after Christmas (with some exceptions). And after all the preparations for Christmas, everyone is usually a little worn out. Planning a service of Christmas lessons and carols can be a lovely way to keep worship simple and joyful. Who doesn't want to keep singing Christmas hymns?

The accompanying liturgy is a flexible one. You can use it at any time of day. It does require a musician, who in many ways leads this service. It also assumes a lay worship leader will be presiding and members of the congregation will read the lessons. As it is written, the assumption is for congregational singing rather than a choir. However, if you have a choir (or perhaps a willing soloist), you might consider replacing a couple of the hymns with anthems.

Notes:

- Nine lessons have been selected, but the Book of Occasional Services provides 13 to choose from. You can find the full list starting on page 40 (https://www.episcopalcommonprayer.org/uploads/1/2/9/8/129843103/book_of_occasional_services_final.pdf)
- You are also allowed to use fewer than nine lessons. The lesson from the third chapter of Genesis is the only lesson that is required. The Book of Occasional Services notes that, "The Lessons may be read without announcement or conclusion, or in the manner prescribed in the Daily Office."
- You may also choose different hymns based on your context and what your congregation is familiar with. If you have *Lift Every Voice and Sing* (LEVAS), there are some excellent hymns in there that you might consider using. The accompanying service assumes that the congregation only has *The Hymnal 1982*.

Preparation:

- It will help your readers if you provide them with copies of their readings ahead of time to give them a chance to practice.
- To print out the lessons for your readers, go here: <https://lectionarypage.net/YearABC/SpecServ/ChristmasLessonsAndCarols.html>
- The altar can be set as you typically do for an office service.

All your congregation will need is the bulletin and a hymnal.